
Human Services Committee

HB 2433

Brief Description: Suspending general assistance benefits of incarcerated persons.

Sponsors: Representatives O'Brien, Ross, Goodman, Warnick, Hankins, Clibborn, Hinkle, Eddy, McCoy, Roberts, Takko, Flannigan, Eickmeyer, Ericks, Sullivan, Sells, Linville, VanDeWege, Blake, Hurst, Morrell, Campbell, Kessler, Roach, Rolfes, Dunn, Simpson, Barlow, Kelley and McDonald.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Suspends, instead of terminates, general assistance if a person, otherwise eligible for benefits, is incarcerated for more than 30 days, and automatically reinstates benefits upon release.
- Permits incarcerated persons to continue to receive medical care services even if general assistance benefits are suspended due to incarceration.
- Determines that amounts paid to providers by the Department of Social and Health Services are to be considered payment in full if they were payments for emergency or necessary medical services provided to confined persons eligible for medical benefits.
- Changes description of persons from being "physically disabled" to being person with a "physical disability."

Hearing Date: 1/22/08

Staff: Linda Merelle (786-7092).

Background:

General assistance is aid to persons who are not eligible to receive federal-aid assistance other than food stamps and medical aid. Under current law, persons who are confined for any length of time in a state penitentiary or county jail, including under the options of work release and home detention, are not eligible to receive general assistance. Once the Department of Social and

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

Health Services (Department) learns that a person is confined, their benefits are terminated. This includes medical benefits.

The city or county that operates a jail is financially responsible for emergency or necessary health care, except that the Department shall directly reimburse the medical care provider if the person confined is eligible under the Department's medical care programs. The financial responsibility for any remaining balance, after the Department has reimbursed the medical provider, lies with the city or county and the medical provider to be split by agreement or, if no agreement, to be split equally.

Summary of Bill:

The Department may no longer terminate general assistance benefits for persons who are confined in jail. If the person is confined in jail for more than 30 days, and otherwise eligible for benefits, their benefits are suspended and automatically reinstated upon their release. Regardless of whether their general assistance-unemployable benefits are suspended, persons confined shall continue to receive medical services under the provisions of general assistance.

Once the Department reimburses a medical provider for emergency or necessary health services, the city or county are no longer financially responsible for any balance. The payment by the Department is deemed payment in full.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on January 18, 2008.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.